

closing their doors for good, unless they receive this critical assistance soon. The funding approved by the Senate today may not be enough to guarantee their future, but at least it offers much needed support.

This relief is long overdue, and I commend the Senate for taking action.

When these devastating storms struck, the entire nation responded in a way that is as caring and as generous as the American spirit.

Thousands volunteered to help. Families opened their homes. School districts across the country accommodated displaced students in their schools. Colleges and universities graciously opened their doors.

The Nation is grateful to all who did so much to help respond in the tragic aftermath of the hurricanes. We are grateful to the school principals and superintendents and the college presidents and deans who served as first-Responders and helped so many students continue their education.

But these educators need help as they struggle to accommodate the students. Congress must do its part to help these devastated communities get back on their feet and enable students to return to their schools. We also need to help the institutions that are laboring so hard to provide a safety net for these children and their families.

That is why the proposals in this conference report are so important. This funding will rehabilitate and strengthen the educational institutions that serve and assist children and students affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and help meet the needs of early education, elementary and secondary education, and higher education.

Thousands of young children affected by the storms need to return home to safe and healthy settings. They need good early childhood programs in adequate facilities. Their families need health and counseling services to cope with the trauma brought on by the storms.

The bill facilitates enrollment in Head Start and Early Head Start by waiving income eligibility and other requirements, so that families affected by Katrina will be able to enroll their children more easily. It provides \$90 million for affected Head Start centers to provide preschool opportunities to displaced students. It also provides additional support and guidance to meet the emotional needs of children and their families.

We are reminded by this disaster that schools are the heart of local communities across America. When schools open, families return, businesses return, and lives begin to return to normal. So I am pleased that the report provides \$750 million for special school reopening grants to districts and communities significantly affected by Hurricane Katrina.

These grants will aid in the effort to retain highly qualified teachers, recover lost data, establish temporary facilities, and take other steps necessary to reopen the schools.

The bill also responds to the efforts of schools in Texas, Georgia, Florida, and other States that opened their doors to displaced students. It provides \$645 million for public and private schools that have enrolled displaced students, in order to ease the transition of students into new schools, support basic instruction, purchase textbooks and materials, and temporarily expand facilities to avoid overcrowding.

Both public and private schools can benefit from this aid, but the proposal sets ideology aside and rejects the attempts by the House and the administration to provide this aid in the form of vouchers to parents through a 1-800 number. Instead, the bill uses the mechanisms of current law to provide aid for students in private schools through the public school system.

The funds can only be used for the same list of allowable educational services as for public schools and so cannot and should not be used for religious activities. It makes clear that all of the aid is temporary, and is being provided in response to the extraordinary circumstances resulting from these disasters. It is not a precedent for future policymaking.

In addition, to help meet the demand for qualified teachers, the bill authorizes the Secretary of Education to encourage states to extend temporary reciprocity for the certification of teachers and para-professionals across state lines. Teachers certified as highly qualified in one state should be recognized as meeting this standard in other States as well.

To ease the burden faced by colleges and universities in the declared disaster area, the bill also authorizes the Secretary of Education to waive various Federal reporting requirements. It includes \$200 million for student aid and waives the institutional matching requirement for students affected by the hurricane. These funds can also be used to help institutions in Louisiana rebuild their facilities and welcome their students home. Our priority should be to help these colleges and universities move into the future.

This relief package is a welcome step to help life return to normal for the hundreds of thousands of children and students uprooted by these deadly storms. We begin today to help the gulf coast communities rebuild and re-open their schools and colleges.

We need to continue this important work in the coming weeks, by assessing the ongoing needs of those affected by the hurricanes, and doing all that is necessary to help them rebuild their lives.

FAILURE OF HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO PASS S. 1558

Mr. LEAHY. I am disappointed that the House of Representatives has failed to act on S. 1558, which passed the Senate on November 10. This bill was introduced by Senators COLLINS and LIE-

BERMAN. I worked with them to amend it to extend for 4 years the "sunset" of a provision first enacted in the Identity Theft and Assumption Deterrence Act of 1998 that grants the Judicial Conference of the United States the authority to redact information from a judge's mandatory financial disclosure in circumstances in which it is determined that the release of the information could endanger the filer or the filer's family. The bill, as amended, also extends the protections of this provision to the family members of filers.

Like the more comprehensive court security measure Senator SPECTER and I have introduced, S. 1968, the Court Security Improvement Act of 2005, CSIA, from which it is drawn, S. 1558 provides judges and their families with needed security by extending the judges' redaction authority without interruption and expanding it to their families. It also strikes the right balance with the need for continuing congressional oversight to prevent the misuse of this redaction authority, which has been a matter of some concern to me. I appreciate that the Judicial Conference is seeking to improve its practices and the Senate passed S. 1558 because none of us wants to see judges or their families endangered. Now, because of the failure of the House to pass S. 1558 and enact the reauthorization of redaction authority for another 4-year period, these protections will lapse at the end of the year.

EPA'S PROPOSED PARTICULATE MATTER STANDARDS

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I rise to speak on behalf of myself and Senators CARPER, BOXER, CLINTON, LAUTENBERG, LIEBERMAN, and OBAMA.

Last night, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency proposed new National Ambient Air Quality Standards for fine particulate matter. The National Ambient Air Quality Standards are the cornerstone of the Clean Air Act. These standards must be set at a level "requisite to public health" with "an adequate margin of safety." They are to be based on the "latest scientific knowledge," and EPA is prohibited from considering costs in setting them. Their fundamental purpose is to ensure that our air is safe to breathe.

We have known for years that fine particle pollution causes premature death, increased asthma attacks, and numerous other health effects. In 1997, EPA revised the particulate matter standard on the basis of that evidence. The Clean Air Act directs that EPA, together with an independent scientific review panel, examine the available scientific evidence and determine whether the existing standard needs to be changed. The proposal by EPA last night, coming almost 5 years late, represents the end result of that effort. Unfortunately, EPA selected the weakest option available to it.

In determining whether to revise the standard, EPA reviewed the more than